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THE KALEIDOSCOPE OF A NURSE'S LIFE

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Do you remember sometime when you were a child, looking into a kaleidoscope, and watching the many, colored fragments of glass form different patterns, as you turned it around? Compared to the even life of some other professions and occupations, that of a nurse seems to me to be a kaleidoscopic existence, for, from the time she enters training until the day she goes to her long rest, it is a round of changing scenes, always interesting, and often beautiful. The first days are very multi-colored ones, the rosy shades of hope predominating and brightening the probation period, at the end of which a few dark-colored specks of doubt force their way into view. The great question of acceptance! How the colors change during those days, until again the brighter hues predominate, when she receives her uniform, and really enters the training school. In due time she finishes her training, and goes out into the world, after graduating. Her first case, perhaps, is in the hospital, and the patient dies. Now the kaleidoscope is dark and gloomy, with all the bright colors hidden. The next case may, perhaps, be a foreigner, who speaks no English and who has been stricken with sickness six weeks after leaving her own country. Her friends call for a few moments each day to interpret, and having obtained the information she needs, the nurse leaves them to converse together. The bell rings to summon her to the room.

"Sit down!" says the interpreter, "she feel better in your presence!"

The softer shades of "being a comfort to others" now come to the front of the kaleidoscope, and these, varying in intensity, but always present, stay with the shifting patterns as she goes from house to house, the mother confessor and advisor sometimes, as someone has called her, and the helper always. Of course, no one person will attract everybody, and there are conflicting rays at times when she is utterly bewildered, as, for instance:

She enters the cottage of an old rancher, aged seventy-three, who has been ill for three weeks, and his irascible temper frightens his wife to such an extent that she has not changed his clothes or given him very much nourishment. Frightened by the edematous swelling of his legs, he has sent her for the neighbors, who advise him to soak the swollen members in hay-seed tea, and then obligingly telephone for the doctor to attend him. With his wife's assistance he takes their advice, only to find that the heat breaks down the tissues, causing large sores on each ankle. However, the swelling has gone, and the old man sees no necessity for a trained nurse. But the doctor leaves her there, and she bathes and feeds him for ten days,

gradually cleaning his part of the house, which is thick with dust and dirt. The bright rays of success clash with the disappointment of the wife, who thought she was soon to be free of her lord and master, and who resents the interference of the nurse who has brought him back to partial health again. Inquiry into this reprehensible state of mind brings out the fact that the old man has been married four times. The first wife died, to his great sorrow, and after wandering all over the seas as a sailor in a merchant ship, he married again, but his wife divorced him. He married a third time, but obtained a divorce within a year. After settling on a farm in the west, a mutual friend (?) introduced him to a wealthy widow who, in reality, was almost penniless, and who had been induced to meet the old man under the impression that he was rolling in riches. Disillusionment came after the marriage, but as he was in need of a housekeeper, and the lady of a home, they had lived together until this illness opened the road to her freedom, and she is not pleased to find it closed again.

The colors in the kaleidoscope after this experience, seem a hopeless jumble, but they straighten out and brighten when the nurse has her first obstetric case, with a sweet young mother and a darling baby to lay in her arms.

Another turn of the glass, and she is now on the other side of the world, before the war, leaving the new world behind and seeing only the gayest colors in the glass, for the beauty of the old world takes hold of her, as she sees Paris and London. She finds nowhere a trip more beautiful than a boat ride down the river Seine on a September afternoon, when the sunlight falls on the tinted leaves, and the swaying branches of the lovely trees are reflected in the blue waters. Along the river bank the patient fisherman angles for the elusive fish, and farther along are the women who make the river bed their washtub. At last she reaches the stately towers of Notre Dame, and lands on the Isle to explore it. Even amongst American tourists she finds sorrow mingling with joy, however, for she is called on a case where the husband and wife are both sick; the wife worn out with anxiety for her husband, who is not recovering from his operation, and who knows his wife will go home alone. The nurse's adventures during her off duty hours, when she wanders around with a dictionary and a guidebook to see the city, amuse the invalids, and the colors are brighter here than later on, when, during the homeward voyage, the ship encounters an equinoctial storm, and, for the first time, she feels the torment of fear and seasickness. Even here, though the waves are unstable, shivering mountains, and the ship will not keep straight, there are a few specks of brightness. A violently hysterical woman who thinks the ship is going down, is led to a chair beside her by the scolding steward.

"Do you think if there was any danger at sea that I should have traveled over it fifteen years?" he asks the woman angrily, almost shaking

her in the fear that she will start a panic. The nurse talks to her, and forgets her own fears in chasing away those of the other woman, and in time the storm passes, and the fairyland of icebergs is seen in the distance, the sun's rays giving an ethereal appearance to the huge blue and green masses.

The kaleidoscope whirls in busy New York, and she can only store up the pictures in her mind to study in future idle hours. Another turn and she is in a Greek household, with a three-day-old baby, and a septic mother. The household also includes the baby's grandmother, and two uncles as well as the father, who is the only English-speaking member of the family.

"How much you charge?" he demands, and she tells him.

"We want cheap nurse!" he replies, "you cost too much, missis!"

The baby has cried for twenty-four hours and refuses to nurse, and the people take the nurse to their hearts when she feeds it a little warm water with a medicine dropper, and succeeds in coaxing it to take its first meal. They fail to find a cheap nurse, and she stays with the case. One morning, during the doctor's visit, the mother complains of so much pain that he orders a hypodermic of morphine. The sensations of the drug are entirely new to her and frighten her more than the pain. After an excited whisper to her mother, the old lady wrings her hands with distress, and going into the garden, peals a large bell hanging there, and the neighbors, Greeks and Italians, come flocking in. The nurse gathers from one who can speak a little English that the little Greek mother is (or thinks she is) dying! Her fright is very real, but a hypodermic of strychnine and a clearance of the neighbors to the kitchen regions, quiet her in a short time and, strange to say, she makes a rapid progress on the road to recovery from that time on. A big event is the baptizing of the little one, which necessitates the presence of a Greek Catholic priest and about fifty invited guests. The baby is immersed by the priest, and later is dressed in front of the kitchen fire by the nurse, who is surrounded by an interested audience of Grecian gentlemen! The baptizing ceremony is very interesting. The godfather holds the child on the left arm, and the priest, taking a dress-length of soft material, which the mother is going to wear when taking her first walk, drapes it over the godfather's right shoulder and across his chest, to enfold the baby in the remainder while a prayer is said over it. The baby clothes are then laid over the godfather's right arm, one by one, from the skirt to the bonnet, each article having a canticle sung over it by the priest, unintelligible to the nurse, but ending in the baby's name, "Ananeas Zaccharias Thomas," to the accompaniment of the baby's cries. After the ceremony the priest takes his departure, and the guests proceed to celebrate.

Another turn of the glass, and the nurse is far away, holding a hospital position, where everything is new and strange at first, but many bright

spots can be seen now in the kaleidoscope. An orderly furnishes many of the humorous ones, for the poor man, very willing, but hopelessly incapable, makes the queerest blunders, and has a decided objection to being bossed by women! Part of his duty is to clean the operating-room and one day a surgeon asks for an appendix specimen which seems to have disappeared during the excitement of getting ready for the next operation.

"Did you do anything with that appendix when you were cleaning up, John?" asks the nurse in charge.

"No, ma'am, I've never touched an appendix all the time I've been here. I see dozens on the floor every day, and never touch them, ma'am, and I can get anyone in this town to speak for my honesty!"

No one can ever know whether he confuses an appendix with sponges, or with instruments, for he hates being laughed at, and it is impossible to question him on the subject without a smile, he looks so very fierce about the matter.

And so the days pass, and if on any one, the patterns are jumbled and refuse to be shaken into any semblance of beauty, there is always the hope that to-morrow may be different, and produce only harmonious combinations.

CASES OF PNEUMONIA SHOULD BE REPORTED AND QUARANTINED

It is clear that a vigorous public health campaign must be directed by committees against the ravages of lobar pneumonia. Some health departments have already taken a forward step in declaring lobar pneumonia a reportable disease, like measles and scarlet fever, requiring visitation by the health departments to insure quarantine. This is a new idea for most people. There are, undoubtedly, millions of persons in the country who would not go into a house where there was measles, scarlet fever, whooping cough or diphtheria, but would not hesitate to go into a sick room where there was a case of acute lobar pneumonia. Nevertheless, the best medical authorities have shown that this disease is extremely infectious, and that those who are stricken with it have a worse chance of recovering than if they had any of the infectious diseases mentioned.—Bulletin of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company.